



A DISCUSSION ON THE SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE OF TEACHING TRADITIONAL VIETNAMESE VALUES THROUGH ART

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ABSTRACT

Although traditional value education in Vietnam has many aspects and methods, most of them are not linked with art education, and the determination of its significance and purpose is not entirely clear. This article examines Vietnam's traditional values in these modern times and raises some evocative issues in order to introduce a new vision for teaching traditional values through art education. The article considers issues of Vietnamese traditional value education for the young generation as a special condition in the current context; recognizing age psychology characteristics of preschool and primary school students; the point of view on maintaining and promoting the values of Vietnamese citizens as the foundation for the image of the global citizen; the role and benefits of art (as a subject) and works of art in education; and outlines the practice of traditional value education in Vietnam.

KEY WORDS: traditional values; Vietnamese traditional; teaching art; quality; capability.

PREAMBLE:

Research on the theory and practice of teaching Vietnamese traditional values through works of art is an important issue in the current context. At present Vietnam does not have a clear vision on the role of art and art education in human development and in conserving and promoting the Vietnamese traditional values that we've acquired since ancient times.

There is a rich body of in-depth research on Vietnamese traditional values. Usually each scholar gives five to more than ten traditional values, which are called traditional moral values or traditional cultural values. However, very little of that research addresses the teaching of those values through art. We offer a clear explanation of the benefits and effectiveness of combining traditional value education with the arts and art education. Accordingly, there will be remarkable results when achieving two great goals simultaneously, namely, art education and Vietnamese traditional value education which we consider weak and in need of more attention.

We hope through this article to introduce an open-ended issue of the big mission that Vietnamese education should embark on immediately and aggressively to ensure our next generation can be on par with the region and world in aesthetic perception along with the goal of preserving and promoting the cultural identity of Vietnam in the new era.

CONTENT:

1. Long-standing traditional values of Vietnamese people: In a separate study on the traditional Vietnamese value system, we have synthesized more than 20 different values. Prominent among them are values such as patriotism, benevolence, industriousness, national solidarity, peace-loving spirit, heroism, etc. Some other values are rarely mentioned, such as responsibility and honesty, but they are still deeply embedded in Vietnamese culture. Research on traditional cultural values of Vietnam have clearly identified the essential components of the Vietnamese value system, past and present.

In numerous studies, researchers site negative changes that have occurred in our value system. A series of unattractive behaviors are cited as being practiced and even encouraged making many people feel insecure. Research suggests that many people have begun to embrace a pessimistic attitude toward life. It cannot be denied that irrationalities in the education system have caused the younger generation to misinterpret or are unaware of our most revered traditional values. Some research suggests that Vietnamese education has placed too much emphasis on academics while underestimating the importance of personal development. While academic achievement has improved dramatically and people are experiencing ever greater success in their careers, the humane values of the national character appear to be fading. The family gathering, the embodiment of Vietnamese family values and one of the factors that create community solidarity and blood relationship, has been diminishing in importance in many modern families. The traditions of respecting educators and exhibiting altruism, which are special qualities of the national character, have also eroded along with industriousness. There is evidence that Vietnamese youth is becoming increasingly dependent and impatient. There have also been worrisome trends in the relationships between teachers and students, parents and teachers, and between students. Values like love for compatriots, patriotism and civic responsibility, which are critical to the national character, are not being inculcated in the younger

generation's value systems. These trends shows that the education system needs to be re-examined in search of solutions and supplemented with new forms. In order to achieve students' optimal personal development, it is necessary to teach those traditional values from the very beginning of their educational experience because those Vietnamese traditional values are also the core qualities of humanity such as love of nature, country and people, industriousness, solidarity, studiousness, etc. Consequently, the draft of the new general education curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education and Training (in 2017) has oriented the preschool to high school curriculum to inculcate in students the five main qualities of patriotism, benevolence, industriousness, responsibility and honesty along with 10 core competencies (03 general competencies and 07 competencies formed through subjects).

The five qualities identified in the 2018 general education curriculum are embodied in Vietnam's traditional value system. Are innate human qualities and values established by the community interchangeable? Yes, we believe that there is an unmistakable similarity between the two. While qualities such as benevolence and industriousness clearly indicate the spirit and personality of a person, those same qualities are also the highest expression of human society. The above has been confirmed by a large body of research by domestic and foreign scholars. The afore-mentioned Vietnamese traditional values are also acknowledged in documents of the Vietnamese Party and State.

2. Psychological Characteristics of Preschool and Primary School Students: Preschool children are ages 0 to 6 years old and primary school students are ages 6 to 11. At this stage, due to the incomplete physical development of the nervous system and senses children's cognitive processes function mainly through actions and through images. These cognitive processes among preschool and primary school students are strongly controlled by emotions. Therefore children are overwhelmingly attracted to objects and activities that appeal to them. A large body of research done in Finland, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore suggests that personality formation and cognitive capabilities must be shaped from the very beginning of the academic experience. Teaching value and behavior standards early in the personality formation period increases the likelihood of the permanent assimilation of those values and behaviors.

Scientific studies have shown that preschool and primary school children perceive the world around them mainly through emotion. Their perception reflects specific attributes, and reflects the appearance of objects and phenomenon while thinking simply through actions and images. That is why one of history's most respected educators, J. A. Comenius, proclaimed that teaching through visualization was one of the golden principles of education. More recent research demonstrates that utilizing images to aide students in memorization results in very positive outcomes because image connections in the cerebral cortex match with the human brain's coding process. In essence all basic information that needs to be memorized are encoded and linked with images. When a signal stimulates the senses, regardless of which of the senses are stimulated, data retrieval from the brain always prioritizes the images, therefore when the senses are stimulated with the concept of a chili pepper we automatically envision the color red. When seeing a chili pepper we imagine the spicy flavor but this doesn't occur in a child who hasn't

had that sensory experience. The more realistic the image presented to the viewer is, the easier it is for the viewer to recognize the image. The visual experience is what enables an individual to recognize acquaintances when and wherever they are encountered. The brain's enduring storage capacity enables an individual to recognize an acquaintance even after long periods of time, even though that acquaintance's appearance has undergone significant change. Only vivid visual images (objects, phenomenon, people, activities, oral description, etc.) can stimulate an emotional response because of their capacity to evoke such a response. Therefore utilizing aesthetically pleasing teaching aides, interesting and engaging experiments, and attractive models not only help students absorb the course content more efficiently but also stimulates their emotions, ethics, wisdom and aesthetics. It's also critically important to utilize works of literature and art to stimulate students emotions and leave them with life long impressions.

Based on the above we believe that utilizing works of art in teaching is highly suitable for preschool and primary school students' psychological and physiological developmental state and will enhance their cognitive development. This suitability will bring efficiency to the teaching of Vietnamese traditional values, and contribute to the formation of desired qualities in the younger generation.

3. **Vietnamese traditional value education for the young generation as a special condition in the current context:** Identifying traditional value education methods including teaching through art education and works of art contribute to the cause of educating Vietnamese people. In essence, traditional value education requires a wide range and scope of vision. The results of this educational orientation are not easily measurable in the short term and even in the long term determining its success would still be difficult. However, if you want to have future generations shaped by traditional Vietnamese cultural values we cannot disregard the teaching of traditional values. Traditional values such as cultural values, ethical values, and customs regarding interpersonal relations will never be outdated or deviated from despite the changes in social norms.

From an educational perspective the imbuing of national ideology and traditional culture is not accomplished only through moral teachings and cannot be taught successfully in the later years of the educational experience when basic behaviors and personalities are already formed. It is impossible to teach traditional cultural values dogmatically and forcefully, the course content has to be persistently presented in a meticulously planned technique that introduces the material in a compellingly creative manner that students willingly embrace. The technique of education through art is one effective method for accomplishing this.

The essence of traditional Vietnamese values is the crystallization of a long-standing culture that has undergone centuries of historical events. Some values are naturally formed in daily life, through family traditions, lineages, indigenous cultures and national cultures. Others can change over time and can be formed through education. The reality of our traditional value education, despite the attention and orientation of the Party and State, has not yet achieved the desired effectiveness, consequently in today's society there are many deviations from the social norm. Some of these deviations occurring in contemporary society are highly impactful and cannot be ignored. These deviations constitute an erosion of Vietnamese cultural values which threaten to diminish the respect and admiration other nations have held for Vietnam's national character. For a long time educational curriculums and objectives have undervalued the teaching of ethics. Slogans that once served as behavioral guidelines such as "one must learn manners before letters" do not bring about changes in behavior. We believe human values are mostly formed through education and that Vietnamese traditional values are necessary for any Vietnamese to ever become a true global citizen.

4. **Maintaining and promoting the values of Vietnamese citizens as the foundation for the image of the global citizen:** Globalization represents a powerful historical trend that has brought about an unprecedented integration of cultural values. This trend has raised concerns among international experts who fear the possible long term impact it is having on the unique cultural values of individual countries. Therefore, many nations have given special attention to preserving cultural values they regard as fundamental to their national characters. Recently, Vietnam, with the help of developed countries, has implemented a global citizen education program. Even though the establishment of a values and skills standard for the global citizen is still controversial, it is meaningful and extremely necessary to instill in each country's citizens the traditional values of their own people and nation. Professor Tran Ngoc Vuong (2017) emphasized that it is necessary for individuals to attain global citizenship using their own values, and that education is the most expedient and enduring means to do so. Therefore it can be affirmed that international integration can only be effective when it is built and implemented on the basis of sustainable traditional values to help countries integrate but not dissolve. Numerous studies have demonstrated that in countries with long standing cultures and advanced education systems, teaching traditional cultural values to children is a vital requirement. For example, in Japan, where schools are known for their rigorous disciplinary

standards, personal conduct and civic responsibility are treasured values. When growing up every Japanese is imbued with a sense of self discipline and civic responsibility in a nation that has for centuries had to embrace self reliance due to unfavorable climatic, geologic and natural resource conditions. South Korea, a country successful in the exportation of culture to the world, is also worthy of consideration. Korean cultural influences from film, cosmetics, fashion and family relations have succeeded in affecting many Vietnamese families' attitudes and behaviors. Korea's ability to export cultural influence is a result of its success in teaching traditional cultural values in its national education system. This reality poses challenges to Vietnam's commitment to preserving its own traditional values.

Vietnam's general education curriculum has been guided by the teaching of basic personal qualities through subjects such as the social sciences and humanities, the natural sciences, literature and languages, civic education, physical education, national defense education, and art education including music and art. At each stage of education the requirements on curriculum are tailored to suit the psychological and physiological characteristics of each age group. For example, in the stage of basic education, grades one through nine, the content of art education as a subject in art is designed in an integrated manner to develop students powers of observation and artistic sensibilities, such as those to perceive and artistically express the world around them. In the career oriented stage of grades ten through twelve the art education content is designed to expand students' knowledge and competencies formed in the previous stage. However, these are only general orientations, the methods to successfully implement the above educational objectives are still a matter of debate.

We all understand that the strength of the Vietnamese people and their long history of tradition is based on their ability to perpetuate those traditional values in this era of modernity, to both integrate and preserve their national character. To a certain extent, when traditional values are adopted as a part of the people's belief system, national solidarity is strengthened and development goals become easier to attain.

5. **The role and benefits of the study of art and works of art in education:** In education, the teaching of Vietnamese traditional values is a new concept. Very few studies in Vietnam have considered the impact of works of art on life. Vietnamese society has never appreciated the role of art in education even though, from a scientific perspective, research in other countries has demonstrated its great effectiveness.

First of all, it must be understood that art is a subject that brings many lasting benefits to children. The requirements of preschool and primary school students gravitate toward the emotional rather than the material. Therefore if education's main focus is on intellectual development rather than emotional development the child suffers risk of unbalanced personality development which can cause personality issues later in life. Emotional needs associated with emotional, spiritual, and ideological life include cognitive needs, communication needs, social needs, self development needs, and especially aesthetic needs. These aesthetic needs are most clearly met in the study of art. Through the study of art students develop their aesthetic senses (one of the high level emotions according to psychology), enabling them to appreciate beauty. Thus art education is clearly a method with many benefits.

From the scientific perspective, we already know that visual signals are first order signals, the primitive communication tool of mankind. The need for communication was responsible for the earliest communicative form which was through the drawing of figures. Many scientific studies have shown that visual signals have the fastest, easiest, and most common level of communicative transmission regardless of national borders. For example, traffic signs, warnings signs, etc. can be completely understood by anyone without verbal communication regarding their meanings. Children can share and express their wishes easily through drawing which is a natural ability. Therefore, teaching through works of art can create an effective educational method at an early stage, and is especially suitable for the psychological and physiological characteristics of preschool and primary school students. Thus we have more basis to state that the teaching of traditional values through works of art brings good results and improves their ability to memorize and retain information. The Ministry of Education has clearly stated that "Art expresses thoughts and feelings by sight, through visual images to express and discover self and the world, and communicating with people and society. The language of art is universal and is considered as one of the means to record, describe, re-create history and reflect on culture and society, understand the past, present and create the future...." (p.25).

Our proposal of using works of art to teach traditional values is very practical. Because firstly, this article will create an integrated educational approach to using works of art to express traditional values so children will absorb and retain knowledge regarding those values more efficiently. This article proposes many effective solutions that can contribute to achieving the goal of educating Vietnamese people in accordance with the orientation of the Party and State concretized in the newly promulgated general education curriculum of 2018. Secondly, the approach to education through art

will bring more benefits than defining a single art education goal. The biggest benefit is helping students learn in a fun and creative way that makes it easier for them to understand and retain the material. In addition to directly contributing an effective teaching tool and method, this article achieves the goal of aesthetic education. This goal, which has been identified in the Ministry of Education's 2018 general education curriculum, is one of the core competencies required of students.

6. **The practice of traditional value education in Vietnam:** Through surveying teachers, there is data on the practice of traditional value education in Vietnam that needs to be considered. We asked the question: "To what extent do you rate the need to teach traditional values to primary school students?" The results are systematized in the table below.

No.	Necessity level	Quantity	Percentage
1	Very necessary	198	45.4
2	Necessary	106	24.3
3	Not necessary	132	30.3

Looking at the table, it can be seen that the majority of teachers rate the need to teach traditional values to primary school students at the level of "Very necessary", accounting for 45.4%. This means that almost half of the surveyed teachers think that teaching traditional values to students is now very necessary and must be carried out in schools. Besides, 24.3% of the teachers chose the "Necessary" level. However, up to 30.3% of the teachers chose "Not necessary". Thus, there is a percentage of teachers who think that teaching primary school students traditional values is unnecessary. There could be many different reasons for this view: it may be because a few teachers are not fully aware of the importance of this activity or because they think that these values are too difficult to instill in students, must be instilled gradually and are more suitable to be taught to students of at a later age...

With another question: "To what extent do you agree with the opinions on the role of traditional value education for primary school students?". The data shows the extent to which teachers agree on the role of traditional value education for primary school students as follows:

No.	The role of traditional value education for primary school students	Average score	Standard deviation
1	Teaching students traditional values will help them develop a comprehensive personality	2.46	0.74
2	Teaching traditional values to primary school students will help them develop emotions and benevolence	2.63	0.63
3	Teaching traditional values will help students improve their ability to feel and share emotions with others	1.80	0.85
4	Teaching traditional values in schools will help train future citizens with qualities and capabilities to meet the requirements of the country's development	2.74	0.46

Note: The highest average score is 3; the lowest is 1

The above table shows that the average scores of teachers' evaluations on the role of traditional value education for primary school students are as follows: The role of "Teaching students traditional values will help them develop a comprehensive personality" has an average score of 2.46. The role of "Teaching traditional values to primary school students will help them develop emotions and benevolence" has an average score of 2.63. The role of "Teaching traditional values will help students improve their ability to feel and share emotions with others" has an average score of 1.80. The role of "Teaching traditional values in schools will help train future citizens with qualities and capabilities to meet the requirements of the country's development" has an average score of 2.74. The role most appreciated by teachers is "Teaching traditional values in schools will help train future citizens with qualities and capabilities to meet the requirements of the country's development" with an average score of 2.74. This is because, according to teachers, traditional values will make an important contribution to the training of qualified and capable citizens to meet the country's requirements. The role rated by the teachers in the lowest position is "Teaching traditional values will help students improve their ability to feel and share emotions with others" with an average score of 1.80. Teachers rarely chose this role because they believe that traditional values don't just stop at improving feelings and sharing emotions with others. This role is only a small aspect because traditional values have a bigger role with a much more important meaning. Thus, it can be said that the majority of teachers agree with the roles of traditional value education for primary school students, in which the role of "Teaching traditional values in schools will help train future citizens with qualities and capabilities to meet the requirements of the country's development" was agreed upon by teachers at the highest level. This is self evident because, in fact, the

goal of education in general is to form human qualities and capabilities to meet the requirements of today's society.

The above are general figures for all subjects in primary school. It shows the difficulty and urgency of common solutions including solutions for the subject of art.

In educational practice, the teaching of Vietnamese traditional values in general and the teaching of Vietnamese traditional values through works of art in particular have not been properly studied. In the context of Vietnamese society with the current cultural changes, it is difficult to impose an educational method from art without properly and authentically questioning the relationship between works of art or artistic products and the messages they might express in their visual language. From a scientific perspective, almost no research has offered synchronous solutions for the curriculum of teaching traditional values through art in particular and fine art in general. Other subjects face the same difficulty.

In the general education curriculum, the visual activity of sculpture and the subject of art have been included for a long time but there are still many challenges to overcome in the method of teaching in order for the curriculum to achieve its target objectives. The visual activity of sculpture for preschool students is taught by teachers with no art education background. While those activities provide a playful distraction they fail to nurture the children's aesthetic awareness. Consequently, the artistic achievement of those children falls short of the curriculum's goals. Children mainly learn to do exercises for the purposes of developing manual skills while aesthetic awareness development is neglected because of the teachers' lack of qualifications. Other educational purposes, including teaching traditional Vietnamese values are not clear. In primary schools, the subject of art is a rigid subject, inclined to manual skills and dogma. Instead of students learning to perceive art they mainly perform stereotypical exercises such as drawing and sculpting. The current purpose of those classes is to complete the dogmatic objectives of the curriculum while ignoring the vitally important development of students' aesthetic sensibilities. Like many other subjects, art lacks adequate content for teaching Vietnamese traditional values.

Other subjects in the primary education curriculum limit their focus to teaching facts while ignoring the teaching of Vietnamese traditional values, they don't place traditional value education on a parallel path with human education. Many subjects use works of art to illustrate educational content that is not relevant to the art's acknowledged meaning thereby failing to take advantage of interdisciplinary goals. Unfortunately, this is a common problem and has no simple solution. In addition to the teachers' lack of art training, there has not been enough emphasis on the visual method even though it has proven to be one of the most effective teaching methods. Teaching through vivid images helps children with abstract thinking and promotes creativity.

The fact that Japanese math text books feature drawings and that attention is paid to the implicit message of the drawings is something to ponder. For example, in the Meiji period, instead of drawing one character playing football, like in American text books, the Japanese math book features four characters engaged in that activity which illustrates solidarity, collectivity, and communality. From such illustrations children learn traditional values through visual cues simply and without imposition. We usually acknowledge that when students learn a poem about family relations the impact of those words on their imaginations will be much more influential if artful visual images are included. In teaching math we use images to help students absorb faster and remember more. Images used to illustrate experiments and evidence need to be clear and easily understood to avoid misinterpretation.

Thus it can be seen that traditional value education in Vietnam today, although identified in the general curriculum, still lacks synchronous solutions and connections between subjects, and that there is very little research that addresses these problems. This article contributes some synchronous solutions on teaching traditional values through the single subject model of art, interdisciplinary models using thematic works of art, and solutions on supporting the compliance and design of textbooks for other subjects.

7. **Two parallel goals of teaching traditional values through the subject of art:** Combining traditional value education with aesthetic education is not a difficult problem if given due attention. In addition to art subjects it is also possible to organize activities for students to acquire knowledge of other subjects based on practical, relevant and humane topics.

Core values making up the national character are typically formed in the national cultural vein, and when expressed in life through the individual they are the equivalent of cultural acts. In that sense, traditional values are very similar to art. Vietnamese traditional values contain within them aesthetic, artistic and humanitarian elements. Therefore, when we establish traditional value education goals we will also be establishing the goals of aesthetic education. Moreover, works of art are essentially the most truthful historical records. The artist, from a historical perspective, is an honest and impartial

historian. The artist reflects contemporary social reality which clearly contains traditional national values. Each work of art always exhibits traditional values and modernity. Using works of art to teach traditional values liberates both functions of art which are social reflection and aesthetic orientation.

In current Vietnamese textbooks the fact that content only achieves the goal of knowledge while ignoring other goals is a weakness, the most serious of those weaknesses being the lack of visual images. Art researcher Chu Quang Tru wrote, "All textbooks, in addition to good scientific content, must have beautiful form, from the ratio of book size, cover, illustration, and art design to printing techniques and paper quality." [Vietnamese Culture As Seen From Art, volume 1, p.168]. In Vietnam, in general, the education curriculum presented in textbooks currently and previously has paid little attention to images, and the use of images doesn't contribute to the objective of aesthetic education. For instance, on page 46 lesson 3 of the fifth grade math textbook, to illustrate how many tons of meat would be required to feed a lion over a 30 day period, they featured an image of ferocious lions. Such ways of using illustrations do not contribute to aesthetic education nor to the teaching of any human values, so it is necessary to do more research and find synchronous solutions to the use of illustrations in textbooks. Although humans have aesthetic needs they must be trained early, regularly and properly to develop their aesthetic sensibilities.

We wish through this study to propose some specific measures for the implementation of an affective curriculum that addresses these issues along with measures related to art editing of textbooks as a way to achieve two goals of Vietnamese traditional value education parallel with teaching knowledge, skills and aesthetics. This way the goal of competency building for pre-school and primary school students would be harmonized with the core competencies, contributing to the development of specialized competencies which is a characteristic of art.

CONCLUSION:

Within the framework of this research we have systematically reviewed the Vietnamese traditional cultural and ethical values that have been cited in the research of leading scholars. As noted above we have synthesized more than twenty different values in the traditional Vietnamese value system. Vietnam's general education curriculum published in 2018 reveals that the five qualities that are required to teach students are qualities that already exist in the traditional Vietnamese value system. The process of finding an affective teaching method through art in order to form in Vietnamese people the qualities and new competencies to meet the requirements of international integration in a short time frame has initially yielded theoretically successful results. The results of assessing the role of art in education are valuable and applicable in practice. They not only help to achieve the goal of quality and moral education in schools but also achieve the goal of aesthetic education. There are many ways to teach traditional values through art and we are doing related research in one of our national projects. Within the scope of this article we share our early results with our readers and hope to engage in practical exchanges regarding our findings.

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**THEO BƯỚC HAI BÀ TRUNG
QUÉT SẠCH THÙ XÂM LƯỢC**

Following Sisters Trung, sweep away the enemy - propagation poster (1978), PHAM VAN DON



Giông thánh - lacquer (1992), Nguyen Tu Nghiem